The Long Walk

screenplay by
James Vanderbilt

based on the book by
Richard Bachman

OVER BLACK:

The sound of a TRUCK banging over a dirt road, the inhabitants within jostling over the uneven terrain.

FADE IN ON:

A PAIR OF WORKBOOTS. Not old, but not exactly new, either. A little faded. Somewhat broken in. The laces, double-knotted across the ankle. Comfortable, like a second skin.

They are attached to the feet of

RAY GARRATY

18 years old. Handsome, with a little baby fat still around the edges. Somewhere between a boy and a man. Sitting in the back-seat of

INT. TRUCK (MOVING) -- MORNING

Driven by Garraty's MOTHER. She pilots the truck in silence.

Garraty sits in the back with his feet up. Staring at the boots. Examining them for some kind of crease or flaw. After a moment, he relaces one of them, carefully.

His Mother pulls the truck to a halt at a CHECKPOINT manned by a SOLDIER.

SOLDIER
Card.

The Mother hands him a LAMINATED CARD with a STATE SEAL on it. The Soldier inserts into a computer, punches in some numbers. Waits a moment and then the screen flashes

Garraty, Raymond Davies
RD 1 Pownal Maine
Androscoggin Country
ID NUMBER 49-801-89
OK-OK-OK

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Cleared.

The CHECKPOINT'S GATE rises.

MOTHER
Don't we get the card back? Don't you-

GARRATY
No, Mom.

The Mother puts the truck in gear.

MOTHER
Well, I don't like it.

EXT. CLEARING -- MORNING

Next to a freshly paved COUNTRY ROAD.

A beautiful Maine morning as Garraty's Mother pulls the truck to a halt past the checkpoint into a makeshift parking lot.

Around them HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE, mostly kids, parents, and soldiers, mill around. The scene, resembling when kids go off to sleepaway camp.

Garraty and his Mother get out. Regarding each other.

MOTHER
Ray. Ray, listen. There's still time to change your mind-

GARRATY
No, there isn't. The back-out date was yesterday.

MOTHER
They'd understand, I know they would. The Major-

GARRATY
You know what the Major would do, Mom.

The Mother winces at this. On the verge of tears.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
This is my idea, Mom. I know it wasn't yours. This way is best.

MOTHER
It's not. Ray, it's not, and if your father were here-

GARRATY
(sharply)
Well, he's not, is he?

His Mother winces at this. Garraty softens.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Let it go, now, Mom, okay?

The Mother digs a tin foil package from her purse.

MOTHER
I- I made cookies. You can take them, can't you? They're not too heavy?

GARRATY
No, they're fine.

He takes them. They stare at one another a beat longer.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Goodbye, Mom.

MOTHER
Goodbye, Ray. Be a good boy.

Garraty watches as she climbs into the truck and PULLS OUT. Watching her go. Looking a little forlorn, himself.

He glances down at his boots again. Relaces the other one.

Stands back up to see ANOTHER BOY saying goodbye to his father. The other boy is tall, dark haired, and well muscled, with a wicked looking SCAR across his chin.

His goodbyes, done, he walks over.

MCVRIES
Hi.

GARRATY
Hi.
(awkward pause)
I'm Ray Garraty.

MCVRIES
Peter McVries. You ready?

GARRATY
I feel jumpy. That's about the worst of it.

McVries nods, looking out towards the road.

MCVRIES
That composition surface will be hot by noon. I'm gonna stick to the shoulder. What do you weigh?

GARRATY
One sixty.

MCVRIES
I'm one sixty seven. The say the heavier guys get tired quicker, but I think I'm in pretty good shape.

Garraty nods. McVries looks like he's in *excellent* shape. A beat. McVries looks over to the CLUSTERS OF BOYS sitting beneath the trees in the shade together.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Better go sit while we can.

They walk over to the shade where three boys -- one sandy blonde and well built, one lithe with a shaved head, and the last brunette and a little chubby -- sit. The chubby one is talking:

OLSON
...If I get warned, so what? You walk an hour, you lose the warning. All you have to do is adjust, adjustment's the key here-

He stops, noticing the new arrivals. Smiling.

OLSON (CONT'D)
More lambs to the slaughter! Hank Olson's the name and walking's my game.

GARRATY
Ray Garraty.

MCVRIES
Pete McVries.

They sit as the blonde offers a hand with a southern accent.

BAKER
Art Baker and this is Curley. We rode up together.

McVries looks at the kid with a shaved head and frowns.

MCVRIES
How'd you get the name Curley?

CURLEY
It was my Daddy's.

MCVRIES
He have curly hair?

CURLEY
No. It's just a name.

Silence. The boys don't seem to know what to talk about.

Garraty looks past them to see a KID sitting on the lowest branch of a tree, alone, eating a jelly sandwich.

He looks younger than the rest, and what's more, he's incredibly skinny, with a fop of blond hair. Eventually we'll come to know him as STEBBINS.

GARRATY
Who's that?

The others look.

BAKER
Met a lot of the other guys all ready, but not him. You think skinny guys got an edge in this?

OLSON
I think skinny guys burn out quick. I nominate him as first out.

The others nod. Garraty continues staring.

GARRATY
He looks young. Can you get a waiver if you're young?

OLSON
Nope, gotta be eighteen. I looked into it, did a lot of research on the Walk.

Olson points to a WHITE MARKER next to the STARTING LINE on the road.

OLSON (CONT'D)
See that marker? That's from the Long Walk the year before last. Kid was so scared he just froze up at nine o'clock. Wouldn't move. He took his three warnings and they gave him his ticket at 9:02, right there at the starting line.

McVries stares at him.

MCVRIES
Why would you tell us a thing like that?

OLSON
I don't know, just making conversation.

A ripple goes through the kids. Garraty looks around to see a HUMVEE APPROACHING on the road. He gets to his feet.

GARRATY
Jesus, it's really him...

All the other boys rise too, and we can see there are ONE HUNDRED in all, all 18 years old.

They CHEER (all except Stebbins) as the HUMVEE rumbles up and a man gets out of it, holding a CLIPBOARD. He is

THE MAJOR

Wearing full military regalia. Face of granite, eyes hidden permanently behind mirrored sunglasses. Standing ramrod straight, he is a fairly awe inspiring figure.

THE MAJOR
Sit down, boys. Keep Hint 13 in mind - "Conserve Energy Whenever Possible".

The cheering subsides as the boys dutifully sit. A CAMERA CREW with the Major documents every move he makes.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
I'm not going to make a speech. I give my congratulations to the winner among your number and my acknowledgements to the valor of the losers. When I call your name step forward to be outfitted, then go back to your place until it is time to begin. Do this smartly, please.

Olson whispers to the others.

OLSON
You're in the army, now...

Nobody laughs.

THE MAJOR
Aaronson, Number 1.

A LARGE BOY named AARONSON steps forward.

The Major shakes his hand as a PIT CREW OF WORKERS surround him - affixing sponsorship logos and discharging a PAINT GUN, which stencils the number 1 to his chest and back with a puffy BOOM! The camera films all of this.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Abraham, Number 2.

A boy named ABRAHAM goes through the same process.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Baker, Arthur, Number 3.

BAKER
That's me.

Baker goes over, goes through the same process. He comes back, flushed. As the Major continues:

GARRATY
Did he say anything to you?

BAKER
(in awe)
He asked me if it was commencing to come off hot down home. Yeah, he... The Major talked to me.

The other boys stare at him, clearly impressed.

A QUICK MONTAGE - Of other boys being called up.

Then it's Garraty's turn.

He shakes the Major's hand as the number **47** is fired on. He coughs a little at the dusty residue.

THE MAJOR
Good luck.

GARRATY
Thank you, sir.

He heads back to the boys. The montage continues. McVries is **61** and Olson **70**.

Olson stays with the Major longer than the others. The Major laughs and claps him on the back. Olson comes back grinning.

OLSON
I told him to keep a lot of money on short call and he told me to give 'em hell. Said he liked to see someone who was raring to rip.

MCVRIES
Pretty good.

Garraty, not paying attention. He's focused on Stebbins, who receives a large **88** from the Major. Stebbins turns and walks back to the group without a handshake.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE MAJOR

Giving out the last number, 100, to a man named ZUCK.

THE MAJOR
Gentlemen, it's 8:58. Time to take positions.
(MORE)

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Line up by tens, no particular order. Stay with your friends if you like.

The Boys stand, walking over to

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- MORNING

They cluster behind the starting line. Next to the road

A HALF TRACK - Rumbles up. A monstrous motorized tank like vehicle, staffed with CAMERAMEN and SOLDIERS. Several hold small SILVER MACHINES in their hands.

OLSON
(nervous now)
Chronometers. Measure our speed. Used to be under five miles per hour that you'd get a warning, but they changed it to four three years ago because the Walks were ending too fast-

BAKER
Olson?

OLSON
Yeah?

BAKER
Relax.

Garraty looks down at his watch.

GARRATY
8:59. One minute.

MCVRIES
Hey, Curley, I didn't mean anything about your name.

CURLEY
I know.

MCVRIES
Just a strange name for a guy with shaved head, you know?

OLSON
Garraty, how long now?

BAKER
What's it matter? It starts when it starts.

OLSON
Yeah. Yeah.

On Garraty's second hand - Ticking away. Past the six...

MCVRIES
Good luck to everyone.

GARRATY
Good luck to you.

The other murmur similar well wishes. Fifteen seconds, now...

MCVRIES
I should have my fucking head examined...

Garraty looks back. Four rows behind them, Stebbins stands. Calm. Still finishing his jelly sandwich.

The Major, standing on the side of the road, raises his hand.

THE MAJOR
Luck to all.

He lowers his hand.

The boys BEGIN WALKING.

And unless I tell you different, Dear Reader, they will continue walking for the rest of the movie. Every time one of them speaks, every time one of them "drops back" to talk to others, every time *anything* else is happening, these boys will be walking at *at least* four miles an hour or above.

You'll see why soon enough.

The Boys spread out, walking in the morning sun. Garraty and McVries stick together, walking on the shoulder. Not speaking. The silence broken by a SOLDIER on the Half Track:

SOLDIER
Warning! Warning 88!

Garraty turns around to see Stebbins picking up the pace.

CURLEY
What I tell you? He's gonna get his ticket right here-

GARRATY
No, he's smart. He takes a warning while he's still fresh, gets an idea of where the limit is. And he can get rid of it easy enough - you walk an hour without a fresh warning, you lose an old one. At 10:02 he's in the clear. And now he knows.

Nobody says anything. They know Garraty's right. Stebbins continues on, pulling another sandwich from his hip pack.

McVries gazes out at the passing scenery.

MCVRIES
Potatoes, I think.

GARRATY
(automatically)
Best in the world.

OLSON
You from around here?

GARRATY
Yeah, downstate. Freeport.

MCVRIES
Does we go anywhere near your hometown?

GARRATY
Straight through. My Mom and girlfriend are coming to see me. If I'm still in it, of course.

OLSON
Hell, won't be half of us gone when we get downstate.

MCVRIES
What about your Dad, he coming?

GARRATY
My Dad got Squadded.

Nobody responds. This clearly means Dad's not coming.

Garraty answers the unasked question:

GARRATY (CONT'D)
It was for speaking out against the Major. Happened a long time ago.

Olson eyes the soldiers on the Half-Track warily.

OLSON
They'll squad anyone these days. My Dad's a preacher, he had this friend, Catholic Priest. Mentioned some of the Restricted Books during Mass, didn't quote or anything, just mentioned their titles. They Squadded him two days later. A *priest*.

MCVRIES
Let's change the subject, shall we?

Garraty looks out at the flat-lands.

GARRATY
Why don't they let people watch the start of the Long Walk?

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)
Spoils the Walkers' concentration.

They all turn at this new voice, which comes from a short unpleasant looking fellow, with slick hair and acne. Number 5, BARKOVITCH. He falls in step with them.

GARRATY
Concentration?

BARKOVITCH
(lecturing)
Yes. No crowds until we reach Caribou. The Major says it's very important to concentrate on calmness at the beginning of the Walk and I agree with him.

MCVRIES
I'm sure he'd be thrilled to know that.

BARKOVITCH
(ignoring this)
Excitement and crowds later. Right now we need to focus. You have to pace yourself. You have to have a Plan. I'm Gary Barkovitch, from Washington, D.C..

CURLEY
And you have a "Plan"?

BARKOVITCH
Indeed I do. Observe.

And Barkovitch STOPS WALKING. The others, continuing on, looking back, surprised.

SOLDIER
Warning! Warning, Number 5!

Barkovitch sits down on the pavement. Taking off his shoe...

MCVRIES
What the fuck is he doing?

BAKER
I don't know...

SOLDIER
Second Warning! Second Warning, 5!

BARKOVITCH
I've got a stone in my shoe!

He shakes his shoe out. Puts it back on, reties it.

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 5! Final Warning!

OLSON
That dumbshit's gonna get his ticket...

But Barkovitch gets up. Trots till he catches up with our guys, grinning.

BARKOVITCH
See? I just got myself a rest.

MCVRIES
Maybe you think so. All I see is you got three Warnings. Now you gotta walk three fucking hours to get a clean slate. And what did you need a rest for anyway? We just started-

BARKOVITCH
(annoyed)
We'll see who gets his ticket first. It's all part of my Plan-

OLSON
Your Plan and the stuff that comes out of my asshole bear a suspicious resemblance to each other.

Baker and McVries laugh and Barkovitch storms away.

GARRATY
You didn't have to be a dick.

OLSON
Fuck that, the guy's a whacko. And he's your enemy. We all are. This *is* a competition, you know.

GARRATY
I know, I'm just saying...

MCVRIES
What are we supposed to be, the Musketeers here? All for One? That's not how this works...

He trails off, looking around.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Where's Curley?

They all look. Curley's fallen behind a little.

OLSON
He's walking too slow.

MCVRIES
He hasn't been warned, which means he's not walking too slow, we're walking too fast.

The others take this to heart and slow down a bit. From behind them comes the sound of an ENGINE.

The Major's HUMVEE, which pulls alongside the rumbling Half Track. The Major stands in the back, speaking to them through a BULLHORN:

THE MAJOR
I'm pleased to announce that you have just finished the first mile of your journey! I'd also like to remind you that the longest distance a full complement of Walkers has ever covered is seven and three quarters miles. I hope you'll better that!

The guys, dropping back to where Curley walks.

MCVRIES
Seven and three-quarters isn't too bad. We can make that, right guys? Right, Curl?

Curley doesn't reply. He's begun limping. A stony silence as the guys choose to ignore this.

BAKER
Hey, Ray, any particular reason you came on the Walk?

GARRATY
The Prize. That's why we're all here, right?

MCVRIES
No.

The others stare at him.

OLSON
What do you mean, no?

MCVRIES
I mean, no. That's not why we're all here. I know why we came and its not that.

OLSON
If it's not the Prize, then why?

McVries just smiles.

MCVRIES
You'll see.

He picks up his pace, pulling a little head of them. Baker turns back to Garraty.

BAKER
He's a little odd, himself.

GARRATY
He's okay. Why'd you come?

BAKER
Prize, too. Not so much the "Anything You Want" part as all that money...

OLSON
My father always says, rich men don't enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

BAKER
You might feel different if you grew up on potato soup, and only had meat only when your Daddy could afford the ammunition.

A beat. Olson thinks about this for a moment, then nods

OLSON
Yeah. Yeah, I guess I might.

BAKER
I win this thing, I'm gonna eat steak the rest of my life. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. What about you?

OLSON
Son, I'm in it for the women, wealth, and fame, but I guess I could go in for the steak thing, too, though.

Garraty and Baker chuckle.

BAKER
Garraty?

GARRATY
Every meal?

BAKER
Every meal.

GARRATY
All right, I'm in.

CURLEY
Guys?

They look back - Curley's fallen behind again and is limping, massaging his left leg.

CURLEY (CONT'D)
Guys, I'm-

SOLDIER
Warning! Warning, Number 7!

CURLEY
I've got a charley horse!

He stops for a moment, kneading his thigh muscle.

CURLEY (CONT'D)
Shit, just give me a sec-

SOLDIER
Second Warning, 7! Second Warning!

The other boys, looking back in fascination at the scene. The Half Track has stopped, sitting on the side of the road next to the panicked Curley.

OLSON
Christ, we're not even two miles into this-

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 7! Final Warning!

Still working his leg, Curley screams at the Soldier:

CURLEY
It isn't fair! It isn't fair if you got a charley horse!

The Soldiers on the half track UNSLING THEIR CARBINES from their backs. Raise them towards Curley, who's crying now...

CURLEY (CONT'D)
IT ISN'T FUCKING FAIR-

The Soldiers FIRE. Curley's chest is BLOWN OUT as the bullets RIP INTO HIM. He COLLAPSES on the pavement, face up. Dead.

Silence.

The shots echo away into the hills. A team of race workers come out to clear the body off the road. Stebbins, who brings up the rear, steps around them as they work.

BAKER
Jesus... I rode up with him...

OLSON
Guess we're not gonna beat that record.

Barkovitch's voice comes sailing back from in front of them:

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)
Ninety nine bottles of beer on the wall, ninety-nine bottles of beer! If one of those bottles should happen to fall-

MCVRIES
Shut the fuck up, Barkovitch!

The only response we hear is Barkovitch's LAUGHTER.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
(softly)
I shouldn't have made fun of his name. Curley's a good name, right?

GARRATY
Right.

MCVRIES
Right.
(suddenly)
Look, I'm out to win this, okay?

BAKER
We all are.

MCVRIES
We could've helped him but we didn't. Because if we helped him, it just means more walking for the rest of us. We're all against each other.

A beat. The others know its the truth.

OLSON
On the other hand, as long as we're on this road, we might as well keep each other amused.

MCVRIES
(looking at Garraty)
On a strictly non-Musketeer basis.

GARRATY
Okay by me.

BAKER
Me too.

OLSON
Me three. And in honor of this resolution, I say we all take a break.

A moment of silence and then the others BURST OUT LAUGHING.

A nervous release. They're still laughing when

GUNSHOTS. From up ahead. Stops the laughter cold.

GARRATY
Who was it?

MCVRIES
We'll know soon enough.

They come up over the crest of a hill to see a BLACK KID'S BODY being cleared off the road by Soldiers.

OLSON
(quietly)
Ninety eight bottle of beer on the wall...

DISSOLVE TO:

OVERHEAD SHOT

Of the BLACKTOP. It's later in the day, now. The Walkers are spread out in different groups all across the road. The sound of GUNSHOTS again...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- AFTERNOON

Garraty walks with McVries and Olson.

MCVRIES
Eight down, ninety-two to go.

GARRATY
You mean ninety-one.

MCVRIES
(smiling)
Yeah, ninety one. My mistake.

Garraty looks back over his shoulder again at Stebbins, who still brings up the rear of the pack all by himself.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Why do keep looking back there? You planning on asking him out?

Garraty nods towards Stebbins.

GARRATY
We've been going seven hours, I haven't seen him talk to one person. Not one.

MCVRIES
So he's a loner, so what? Maybe he doesn't want to make any friends.
(shrugs)
Maybe he thinks it'll make this easier...

Garraty looks away. McVries stops, realizing what he said.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Sorry. Came out wrong.

GARRATY
It's not that, it's...
(MORE)

GARRATY (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I've been watching him really close, Pete. And I don't think he's even sweating yet.

A beat. Our guys *are* sweating. A lot. McVries looks back again.

MCVRIES
No, he's sweating. It's just that guys like that do it on the inside.

OLSON
My legs feel funny.

A beat.

GARRATY
Funny, how?

OLSON
Like the muscles are all turning baggy.

MCVRIES
Relax, it happened to me a couple hours ago. It goes away.

OLSON
(relieved)
Does it?

MCVRIES
Yeah, don't worry.
(to Garraty)
I'm gonna walk with Hank for a little. Come on Olson, lets hop to it!

McVries and Olson speed up, leaving Garraty alone.

HARKNESS (O.S.)
You're Garraty, right? 47?

Garraty, shaken from his reverie turns to see a boy has fallen in step with him, holding a notebook. He is tall and lanky.

GARRATY
Yeah.

HARKNESS
I'm Harkness, 49.

He writes Garraty's name in his notebook. As he scrawls, he accidentally bumps into a tough looking kid, COLLIE PARKER. Scary looking guy - not the type you want to bump.

PARKER
Watch where the fuck you're going!

HARKNESS
Sorry...
(to Garraty)
I'm taking down everyone's name and number. You're probably wondering why.

Baker drops back next to them.

BAKER
You're with the Squads.

HARKNESS
When this is all over, I'm going to write a book.

GARRATY
You mean, if you win you're going to write a book.

HARKNESS
A book about the Long Walk from an insider's point of view could make me a rich man.

The tough kid PARKER, sneers at him.

PARKER
Hey, dick: If you win you won't need a book to make you a rich man.

HARKNESS
(frowning)
I guess not... still, it'd make an interesting book, don't you think? What's your name and number?

PARKER
Collie Parker, 666, now get the fuck away from me, Shakespeare.

Harkness hurries away, spooked. Parker turns to Garraty.

PARKER (CONT'D)
You're the hometown kid, right?

GARRATY
Yeah.

PARKER
Tell me something, how could you live in such a fucked up state? We been walkin' all day, all I seen is potatoes and cows. I'm about to die of boredom.

BAKER
Go ahead and do it then.

PARKER
I ain't talkin' to you, you fucking hick. You want to do something about it?

He stares at them. Daring them. Baker shrinks a bit. Parker smiles, point made - he's a scary motherfucker.

PARKER (CONT'D)
What I thought.

He drops back. Baker looks at Garraty.

BAKER
Such wonderful people I've met today - I'm really glad I came.

Garraty laughs. Baker joins in.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Hey, you know that guy who tripped as we crossed the train tracks? I hear he's still bleeding.

GARRATY
Who, Zock?

BAKER
Zuck, I think. Vegas had him in the Final Ten. Gonna mangle their betting line, that's for sure.

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)
How far to Caribou, Maniac?

Garraty turns to see Barkovitch yelling from behind.

GARRATY
How the hell should I know?

BARKOVITCH
Aren't you from this dry fart of a state?

McVries comes back to rejoin Garraty and Baker.

MCVRIES
It's about seventeen miles, now fuck off and go sit down.

BARKOVITCH
Fuck you, McVries! I'm gonna dance on your grave!

McVries just holds his middle finger out behind him. Parker laughs. Barkovitch stays quiet.

GARRATY
Don't let him get to you. Just concentrate on walking him down

MCVRIES
Thanks, coach, I'll try and pull this one out for you.
(pause)
Olson's flagging. How about you guys, getting tired?

GARRATY
No, I've been tired for quite some time now. You?

McVries grins at him.

MCVRIES
Just go on dancing like this with me forever and I'll never tire, Ray. We'll scrape our shoes off the stars and hang upside down from the moon.

They pass ZUCK, Number 100, the guy who fell. His knee, a BLOODY MESS.

He's limping, trying in vain to stay above 4 MPH, but slowly falling behind. Zuck tries to smile at them.

ZUCK
Hey, fellas...

GARRATY
Hey.

ZUCK
Shit... Life's funny, ain't it?

He falls behind them before they can respond.

MCVRIES
He won't last much longer.

OLSON (O.S.)
McVries?

It's Olson, up ahead. Slowly dropping back to them.

OLSON (CONT'D)
McVries? It isn't going away. That feeling I told you about-

MCVRIES
It will, Hank.

OLSON
It feels like my legs'll collapse. Like a bad foundation. That won't happen, will it, Ray? Will it?

GARRATY
No.

OLSON
I shoulda listened to my father. "Be me like me", he said, a Man of God. God'll protect you...

Olson points to the Half Track rumbling along beside them.

OLSON (CONT'D)
That one with the red armband's been giving me the hairy eyeball for the last hour or so. Like he's got a sixth sense about it.

Garraty looks, one particularly imposing soldier with a RED ARMBAND stares down at them.

OLSON (CONT'D)
(to the Soldiers)
You like it, don't you? You like it, right?

RED ARMBAND stares back at him, face like a mask.

SOLDIER
Warning! Warning, Number 70!

OLSON
Shit, shit, gotta pick up the pace...

He does, a little. He falls behind the others but still manages to move a little faster than before.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
Third Warning, 100! Final Warning!

MCVRIES
Zuck.

BAKER
Makes you think, doesn't it?

GARRATY
Yeah. I been thinking about a lot of things.

BAKER
Like?

Garraty turns and points to Stebbins.

GARRATY
Him. Why he's here, why he doesn't say anything, whether he'll live or die-

MCVRIES
We're all gonna die sometime, Garraty.

GARRATY
Yeah, but hopefully not tonight.

BAKER
I gotta piss.

He turns around, walking backwards now. Unzips his fly and calls out to the guys walking directly behind him:

BAKER (CONT'D)
Make way boys! Third leg's coming out for a look-see!

The others laugh as Baker begins pissing.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Hey, Ray, want me to aim at the skinny kid for you?

Garraty doesn't respond as a sobering thought hits him.

GARRATY
Hey, Pete? Pissing on the road's all well and good but what do we do when...

MCVRIES
What, we gotta shit?

GARRATY
(embarrassed)
Yeah...

MCVRIES
We shit. Just squat and waddle. You never saw them when they blur that on the Long Walk TV Coverage?

GARRATY
My Mom always covered my eyes. Besides, I don't want to do that on TV.

MCVRIES
Then you better shit now, cause its continuous coverage after Caribou.

Behind them, Baker zips up, turns around, and rejoins them.

BAKER
Ahhhh, the pause that refreshes. I highly recommend you two-

He stops, seeing something. His face goes white.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Oh, fuck. Fuck me, no...

They all follow his gaze to see

A ROAD SIGN

STEEP GRADE AHEAD
TRUCKERS USE LOW GEAR

And as our boys come up over a rise they see it...

THE HILL

An ENORMOUS GRADE taking the road up at a 45 DEGREE ANGLE for almost a quarter mile. For a car it'd be a bitch - for boys who've been walking all day, its insanity.

MCVRIES
You gotta be *kidding*.

From up ahead:

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)
Step into it, brothers! Who wants to race me to the top!

BAKER
Shut your goddamn mouth, you freak!

GARRATY
Okay, okay, we can do this... all we gotta do is maintain speed-

BAKER
How the *fuck* are we gonna do that?

GARRATY
We get to the top and it'll probably go down again, easy walking for a mile or two after...

From behind them:

PARKER (O.S.)
I *hate* your fucking state, Garraty! *I hate it!*

MCVRIES
I'm gonna walk with Olson.

He drops back to fall in step with their chubby companion. Exchanging a glance, Garraty and Baker follow.

Olson is already huffing and puffing as they reach the bottom of the hill. Olson looks up. It appears *endless*.

OLSON
I don't- I don't think I can make it up... Not at four miles and hour...

Nobody responds.

They start up the Hill.

It's terrible going. They each lay one foot in front of the other, exertion showing on their faces. Between panting:

GARRATY
Jesus *Christ*, this is steep-

BAKER
Don't talk.

They keep going. Toughing it out. After a bit:

OLSON
I can't do it. I can't do it anymore-

SOLDIER
Second Warning, 70! Second Warning!

MCVRIES
They're playing your song, Olson. Pick up your feet, I want to see you dance up this hill like Fred Astaire.

OLSON
What- What do you care?

Sweat pours down his face as he strains with each step.

MCVRIES
Rarin' to rip, isn't that what the Major said? Give 'em hell, Hank!

OLSON
Fuck you-

MCVRIES
Come on, give us hell!

OLSON
Fuck you!

He redoubles his efforts. From behind GUNSHOTS. Garraty glances back to see Stebbins, still walking. Behind him...

GARRATY
Zuck.

BAKER
Don't look, just keep going.

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 70! Final Warning!

MCVRIES
Come on, Olson, you're not even trying!

OLSON
(in tears)
FUCK YOU!

MCVRIES
You want to die on this hill, then just do it, lay down and die, make it easier on the rest of us-

GUNSHOTS up ahead, followed by a high pitched SCREAM.

BAKER
That was Barkovitch, I'm sure of it-

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)
Wrong, redneck! One hundred percent dead wrong!

SOLDIER
Second Warning! Second Warning, 60!

Our guys power past Number 60, a guy named LARSON who is SITTING next to the Half Track. To the Soldiers:

LARSON
Listen, I'll catch up - a fellow can't walk all the time, can he fellows? Not *all* the time...

Larson tries to grab Olson's pants leg as he passes; Olson moans and veers away from him.

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 60! Final Warning!

GARRATY
Oh, fuck, I don't wanna see this...

LARSON
(panicked)
Hey, don't do that! Just a sec, I'll get up just don't-

As Larson gets to his feet, Red Armband BLOWS HIS HEAD OFF.

MCVRIES
Is that what you want, Hank? You wanna die?

OLSON
Fuck you!

BAKER
Jesus, Pete, leave him alone-

MCVRIES
I can't leave him alone, he's RARIN' TO RIP!

Olson digs in, keeping his pace above four...

Garraty looks up - the top of the hill in sight...

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Come on, fat-ass, a hundred more feet-

OLSON
I'll kill you, I swear to God!

MCVRIES
Gotta be alive to kill me, so *push!*

And they do. Our boys, finally making it over the CREST OF THE HILL. Beyond it, the road slopes down gently for at least two miles. They all exhale in relief.

BAKER
Thank, Christ...

Collie Parker appears next to them bellowing:

PARKER
Fuck this state! You hear me Garraty? Fuck it hard and in the ass!

Garraty, swept up in still being alive.

GARRATY
Hard in the ass, I'm with you!

Parker, grinning at him.

PARKER
That's right, Garraty - testify!

Garraty turns to speak to Olson, but finds the chubby boy BLUBBERING, snot running down his face.

McVries lays a hand on Garraty's shoulder.

MCVRIES
I'd stay away for awhile.

GARRATY
You saved his life.

MCVRIES
Bullshit, I was trying to psych him out-

GARRATY
It's not bullshit and you know it. You saved him.

MCVRIES
Ray, how dumb would I have to be to try and save someone here, huh?

Garraty just stares at him.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
You think what you want, Musketeer.

They keep walking.

BAKER
How many we down to now?

Harkness appears next to them.

HARKNESS
Eighty-nine. Eighty-nine pennies.
(off their looks)
See, I put ninety-nine pennies in my pocket, and every time someone gets their ticket I drop one on the road-

BAKER
That's sick. That's fucking sick, do you know that?

HARKNESS
(chastened)
I- It's just for luck-

BAKER
Jesus, you gonna put *that* in your book?

Harkness walks away, shamed.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Sick fucking bastard, I tell you. Questions for his *book*...
(shaking his head)
What do you think you chances are? Are you familiar with the Long Walk's history? Have you ever seen the end of a Long Walk-

MCVRIES
Have you?

BAKER
What, seen the End?

MCVRIES
Yeah.

BAKER
No. My father was against them.

MCVRIES
Mine too. Ray?

GARRATY
No. We'd just read about them in the paper. My Dad only let me watch the first couple days on TV. I never understood why-

STEBBINS (O.S.)
I know why.

Garraty JUMPS at the voice - the skinny boy with the jelly sandwiches finally speaks. He's caught up with them.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
I've seen one End.

GARRATY
What's it like?

STEBBINS
You don't want to know.

Silence from the others. Maybe they *don't*. But still...

GARRATY
I asked, didn't I?

Stebbins takes a deep breath.

STEBBINS
I saw the End four years ago. They had the National Guard and Sixteen Federal Squads out to augment the State Police. They had to. People were packed sixty deep on both sides of the road for fifty miles. Over twenty people were trampled to death before it was all over. They were trying to move with the Walkers, trying to see the end of it. I had a front row seat. My Dad got it for me.

GARRATY
What's your Dad do?

STEBBINS
He's in the Squads. And he had it figured just right - sixteen miles over the New Hampshire border. I didn't even have to move. The Walk ended right in front of me.

Stebbins pauses. The others entranced, waiting for him to continue. And so he does.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
We could hear them coming before we saw them. It was one big sound wave, getting closer and closer... It was an hour before the two of them finally came into view. They weren't looking at the crowd, it was like they didn't even know the crowd was there. They were looking at the road, both of them, just hobbling along, like they'd been crucified and then taken down and made to walk with the nails still through their feet...

OTHER BOYS are listening now. A small moving crowd growing around our boys in horrified silence, as Stebbins continues:

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
The crowd was yelling at them, like they could still hear. Some were yelling one guy's name and some were yelling the other's, but the only thing that really came through was this "Go, Go, Go," chant. I was getting shoved around like a beanbag - the guy next to me either pissed himself or jacked off in his pants, I couldn't tell you which.

Garraty, looking away, not wanting to listen anymore, but...

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
One of the Walkers was this big blonde with his shirt open and one of his shoe soles had come unglued and was flapping. The other guy wasn't even wearing shoes anymore, he was in socks, and his socks ended at his ankles. The rest of his feet... Well, he'd just walked the rest of his feet away. I don't think he could feel it anymore, though-

MCVRIES
Stop. For God's sakes-

STEBBINS
You wanted to know. Didn't you say that?

Silence.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
It was the big blonde that lost. He threw both of his arms up like he was Superman, only instead of flying, he fell flat on his face. They gave him his ticket right there because he was walking with three. They were both walking with three.

Olson moans.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
Then the crowd started to cheer. They cheered and they cheered and then they saw that the kid who won was trying to say something, so they shut up. He had fallen on his knees, you know, like he was going to pray, only he was crying. And he crawled over to the dead kid and started talking, only we couldn't hear it. Then the Soldiers rushed out and told him he'd won the Prize and asked him how he wanted to start.

GARRATY
What'd he say?

STEBBINS
Nothing to them, he was still talking to the dead kid. He was telling the dead kid "Sorry".
(pause)
I don't remember much after that.

He pulls another jelly sandwich from his belt. Takes a bite, chews thoughtfully, and regards them.

GARRATY
Who *are* you?

STEBBINS
Stebbins, Tom. Number 88.

GARRATY
Stebbins...

STEBBINS
That's me.

GARRATY
You think you're gonna win, don't you?

Stebbins takes another bite of his sandwich.

STEBBINS
I'm sure of it.

And he drops back, away from them, and resumes his place at the rear of the group.

CUT TO:

THE SUN

Dipping low in the sky. It's later now and as Magic Hour fades, the Walkers are bathed in twilight...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- EVENING

As the Walkers tread beneath a hand lettered banner strung over the road -

WELCOME TO CARIBOU!

This signals the first point on the route where both TOURISTS and other MEDIA can observe the Walk, and Caribou's TOWNSFOLK are out in full force.

People of all ages are out in force, holding banners, cheering the Walkers on. Garraty, McVries, Baker, Harkness, and Parker walk together, taking the crowd in.

MCVRIES
This is a nice change. I was starting to get lonely.

IN THE CROWD

A matronly WOMAN pushes to the front of the barricade. Looking for someone, shouting to the Walkers:

WOMAN
Percy! Percy, where are you!

A skinny kid, PERCY, looks up at this. The Woman spots him.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Percy, Percy, I'll tell them it was a mistake! You come home, you come home right now!

Percy lowers his head, embarrassed, and walks past her.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Percy!

Our guys, watching. Harkness shakes his head.

HARKNESS
Happens every year. Someone's parents freak out, come down, and try and get their kid out of the Walk. Least she didn't try and climb the barricade, get on the road. That's a capital offense, they can shoot you for that.

BAKER
Quiet down, Shakespeare. Sunny days are up ahead.

And he points to...

A GROUP OF TEENAGERS

Standing on the side of the road. One GIRL IN A TUBE TOP with large breasts jumps up and down, cheering and bouncing wildly.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Look at those lung hammers, my dear...

MCVRIES
Lung hammers?

BAKER
It's a technical term.

The Girl, seeing Garraty, holds up a poster:

GO, GO, GO GARRATY 47!

PARKER
Will ya look at that...

MCVRIES
I think you should go say hi, Ray.

GARRATY
I couldn't-

BAKER
It's not against the Rules - you can have contact with anyone in the crowd.

PARKER
I'd contact the *shit* outta those...

Garraty looks at the Girl, longingly. McVries puts a hand on his shoulder.

MCVRIES
Ray. Life is short.

Garraty looks at him and smiles... and breaks into a RUN towards the Girl! Gets over to her, throws his arms around her and KISSES HER DEEPLY.

SOLDIER
Warning! Warning, 47!

Garraty breaks the kiss and looks at the Girl.

GARRATY
Thanks.

GIRL
(star-struck)
Oh... oh... *sure!*

And Garraty trots back to his cheering friends before receiving the second warning. Baker throws an arm around him.

BAKER
For that, my friend, I would have taken three warnings!

PARKER
Did you squeeze her tits?

GARRATY
Was I supposed to?

PARKER
You should've. Probably the last tits you'll ever get a chance to feel and those were big ones.

McVries stares at him.

MCVRIES
Well doesn't *that* just bring all of us down?

PARKER
Fuck you, Scarface.

Parker shuffles off. Garraty looks over at McVries.

GARRATY
Hey, Pete, how *did* you get that scar?

McVries doesn't answer.

Up ahead a TV REPORTER is interviewing Walkers as they pass by. The Reporter finishes with Barkovitch and moves to pack up. Barkovitch walks over to our group.

BARKOVITCH
The reporter ask you how you felt?

GARRATY
He didn't get to me.

BARKOVITCH
Too busy sucking face, huh? Well he asked me. Want to know what I said?

MCVRIES
Nobody gives a flying fuck what you said-

BARKOVITCH
I said I felt *great*. I said I was ready to go on *forever*. And you know what else? I said I was gonna dance on your fucking graves! That's right!

Barkovitch does a little jig to demonstrate.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)
All part of my Plan, fuckers! On your graves!
(humming a jig)
Duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-

RANK (O.S.)
Shut the fuck up!

From behind them. A big dude named RANK, coming up fast.

BARKOVITCH
You shut up, Neanderthal, I'm dancing!

He continues as Rank, passing grabs a hold of him, trying to make him stop. Barkovitch, panicked, flailing:

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)
Rule Eight, Rule Eight, no interference-

He flails so hard he knocks Rank back. Rank stumbles and falls... a CRACK as his head HITS THE PAVEMENT.

SOLDIER
Second Warning, 82! Second Warning!

Rank lies there, unconscious. The Half Track rumbles to a halt next to his body.

MCVRIES
They can't warn him, he's out cold-

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 82! Final Warning!

McVries, shouting at the soldiers, now.

MCVRIES
What the fuck is wrong with you! He's unconscious, he can't move-

The Soldiers FIRE SIMULTANEOUSLY into Rank's unmoving body.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Goddammit!

McVries SNAPS. He begins moving the WRONG DIRECTION back towards the Half Track. Yelling as he goes:

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Come on down here! Put those rifles down and come on down here!

GARRATY
Pete!

SOLDIER
Warning! Warning, Number 61!

MCVRIES
Come on down, one at a time or all at once, I don't give a shit!

He reaches the Half Track and SPITS on the side of it. Red Armband atop it stares down at him impassively.

SOLDIER
Second Warning, 61! Second Warning!

MCVRIES
Fuck your warnings!

On Garraty, watching McVries lose it. Walking the other way... He breaks and RUNS BACK to try and stop McVries.

BAKER
Garraty, what the fuck are you doing-

SOLDIER
Second Warning, 47! Second Warning!

Garraty grabs McVries, trying to drag him away.

GARRATY
Come on, *goddammit-*

MCVRIES
Get outta here, Ray, I'm gonna fight them-

GARRATY
They're gonna kill you, it's what they want - *don't give them what they want!*

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 61! Final Warning!

Red Armband and his friends unslinging their carbines...

McVries' eyes seem to clear...

Red Armband, flicking off his safety...

And then McVries starts walking again. Just like that. Garraty follows. The Soldiers, lowering their rifles.

Olson stares at Garraty, in open-mouth shock.

OLSON
You saved him. Why did you do that? *Why did you do that?*

GARRATY
(stunned)
I-

OLSON
God's gonna strike you down for what you did, you wait and see! *God's gonna strike you down!*

Garraty hurries away from the apoplectic Olson to catch up with the angry McVries.

GARRATY
Pete-

MCVRIES
(bitter)
Go to hell.

GARRATY
I thought you were gonna buy it-

MCVRIES
But I didn't, thanks to the Musketeer.

His hand goes to his face. Touching his scar.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Fuck, we're *all* gonna buy it.

GARRATY
Not all of us. Somebody wins. It might be one of us-

MCVRIES
Nobody wins, Ray!
(MORE)

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
There's no winner, no Prize - they take the last guy out behind a barn somewhere and shoot him too.

And Garraty is suddenly angry, at the end of his rope.

GARRATY
Don't be fucking stupid! You don't have the slightest idea what you're saying-

McVries turns and stares straight into him.

MCVRIES
Everybody loses. Mark my fucking words. Everybody loses, and you better get used to it.

He storms away. Garraty, alone when he hears behind him:

STEBBINS (O.S.)
Amen.

He turns to look, but Stebbins head is down, concentrating on the road, still at the back of the pack. Baker approaches.

BAKER
You did a good deed back there.

GARRATY
I guess.

BAKER
Shouldn't make a habit of it.

Garraty stares at him. Baker continues, uncomfortably.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Pete's a good guy... but he's one *more* guy, know what I mean?

Garraty finally nods.

GARRATY
Yeah.

BAKER
Okay, then. We got that straight.

GUNSHOTS from up ahead.

GARRATY
Olson?

BAKER
Naw, he's still with us. Hey, Harkness, how many pennies now?

Harkness, to the left of them, grimaces.

HARKNESS
I threw them away. I didn't mean any offense by it-

BAKER
(softer)
No, I'm just asking. What's the count?

HARKNESS
Eighty-one.

BAKER
Eighty-one. Shit, that's a lot of guys.

He looks out at the passing scenery. They're our of Caribou and passing some heavily wooded areas. No crowd here.

BAKER (CONT'D)
It's almost dark. We could slip into the woods and they'd never see it-

HARKNESS
They got infrared sweeper-scopes and high intensity microphones. Hell, they can hear everything we're saying. No way we slip away.

BAKER
Ah, Harkness, you take all the fun outta living.

Barkovitch appears out of the darkness, dropping back to be with them. He looks uncharacteristically nervous.

BARKOVITCH
Look... Fellas... back there, I didn't have anything to do with that-

BAKER
The hell you didn't.

BARKOVITCH
I didn't *mean* for him to get knocked out- he attacked me, you all saw-

BAKER
I thought you were gonna dance on our graves, Barkovitch. Wasn't that what you said?

MCVRIES (O.S.)
How many bottles of beer now, Killer?

They look to see McVries has dropped back too.

BARKOVITCH
I am *not a killer*-

MCVRIES
It's not enough for those fucks on their overgrown Tonka Toy to pick us off one by one, you've gotta help them out? Come on, Killer, aren't you gonna dance for us again? Aren't you gonna tell us about your "Plan"?

BARKOVITCH
Fuck you, McVries! My plan is to *win*. What's yours, huh? You look about ready to go. You're not gonna win, why don't you do us all a favor and cash out now?

McVries stares at him with dead eyes.

MCVRIES
I may not win the Walk, Killer, but I promise you one thing - I'm gonna see you die on this road.

Barkovitch just storms away. McVries looks over to Garraty who walks along stonily. Baker turns to Harkness.

BAKER
Come on, Hark - let's let these two smooch and make up.

They speed up, leaving Garraty and McVries alone.

MCVRIES
Anyway... thanks.

GARRATY
For what?

MCVRIES
For you know what.

GARRATY
Come on, how dumb would I have to be to try and save someone here, huh?

McVries smiles at this.

MCVRIES
Point taken.

He turns to Garraty, looking at him as if for the first time.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
You know what? If I had a dollar... *just* a dollar, mind you, I think I'd put it on you, Garraty. I think you've got a chance to win this thing.

Garraty laughs.

GARRATY
Putting the whammy on me?

MCVRIES
The what?

GARRATY
The whammy. Like telling a pitcher he's got a no-hitter going.

McVries smiles.

MCVRIES
Maybe I am.
(pause)
I hope Barkovitch buys out soon.

Garraty doesn't reply. They walk on...

CUT TO:

CRASH!

LIGHTNING crackles across the NIGHT SKY. The THUNDER booms across the plains as SHEETS OF RAIN pour down on

EXT. ROUTE 7 -- NIGHT

HUGE KLIEG LIGHTS on the trucks and half-track illuminate the scene.

The Walkers, being pummeled by the downpour as they trudge on. Garraty walks with Baker, McVries, and Harkness, all of them wearing Long Walk issue ponchos against the elements.

Race workers flit between them with the paint gun, firing their numbers onto ponchos so they can still be identified.

The roadway has become a STREAM, with an inch deep water flowing downhill, against the direction of the walk. With each step, the boys' waterlogged feet slap down into the liquid and then splash back up.

MCVRIES
Enjoying your shower, Ray?

Harkness SNEEZES.

HARKNESS
This is crazy. Making us walk in *this* is crazy.

MCVRIES
I don't know, personally, I find it kind of invigorating.

HARKNESS
Yeah, well, personally, I find you kind of *nuts*. This is suicide. Shit, I think I've got a fever...

He sneezes again. From somewhere behind Garraty:

PARKER (O.S.)
Hey, Garraty-

GARRATY
I know, I know, you hate my fucking state, fuck it hard in the ass, right?

PARKER (O.S.)
Right! That is all!

Garraty looks ahead to see a boy walking WITHOUT A PONCHO. It's Olson. Garraty speeds up and reaches him.

GARRATY
Olson?

Olson doesn't respond. His eyes, with the thousand yard stare. He looks like a zombie.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Olson, you should put on your poncho, you're gonna get a cold-

Garraty reaches out and touches him. Olson looks up.

OLSON
The whore of Babylon has come among us! She lays in the streets and spreads her filth on the cobblestones!

Garraty backs off quick. Olson returns to his trance. McVries, Baker, and Harkness catch up.

GARRATY
Olson's... gone.

MCVRIES
But he keeps walking. Walk or die, that's the moral of the story.

GARRATY
How do you do that? Lose your mind and keep going?

STEBBINS (O.S.)
You'll see.

They all turn to see Stebbins has caught up with them.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
Last year? Guy crawled two miles.
(MORE)

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
Both his legs had cramped and his mind? Phew... But he crawled at four miles an hour for two miles before he got his ticket.
(to Garraty)
Your friend Barkovitch might be right. Maybe you should give up now. If you don't want to see what's on the other side.

GARRATY
Of death?

STEBBINS
Of the *mind*. Shortest Walk on record went two hundred seventy miles, we've done about a *quarter* of that. Nobody walks two-seventy without getting like him.

He points to Olson. McVries sneers at him.

MCVRIES
What is this, your big psych-out play?

STEBBINS
McVries, right? You got the story right but the moral wrong - it's not walk or die, it's *die or go crazy*. Only question is, which scares you more? Right now, probably death, but that'll change. We're only a quarter of the way down the road. It's early yet.

The others stare at him.

GARRATY
Which scares *you* more?

Stebbins just smiles at him.

STEBBINS
I'm not concerned.

He drops back, the leaving them alone.

BAKER
I *really* don't like that guy.

GARRATY
It's a bunch of psych-out bullshit, right, Pete?

MCVRIES
(weakly)
Right.

But McVries doesn't seem too convinced. None of them do. Harkness SNEEZES again.

The sound of GUNSHOTS from behind them. None of them turn.

HARKNESS
Who?

MCVRIES
(abruptly)
I don't know and I don't want to know. It's just one less of you I need to walk down.

He speeds up, pulling ahead. Baker suddenly looks at Garraty and Harkness.

BAKER
You ever hear that thing about a drowning man's life passing before his eyes?

HARKNESS
I think I read it once.

BAKER
You think that might happen to us? On the Walk?

GARRATY
Christ, I hope not.

BAKER
Do you think... Never mind.

GARRATY
No, go on. Do I think what?

Baker takes a deep breath.

BAKER
Do you think we could live the rest of our lives on this road? The part we would have had if we hadn't... you know.

Garraty and Harkness. Not knowing how to respond.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Yeah. That's what I thought.

A LOUD CRACK! We can't tell if it's

GARRATY
Gunshots or thunder?

Harkness turns around, looking behind them.

HARKNESS
Both.
(suddenly)
You think Stebbins was-

GARRATY
It was a psych-out. That's all.

Harkness nods. Silence. They walk on.

And Garraty realizes that Harkness is silently WEEPING under the hood of his poncho.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Hey... hey, it's all right-

HARKNESS
(quietly)
Why do people always say that? It's *not* all right and we all *know it*.

Garraty and Baker exchange a look. This is getting *bleak*.

GARRATY
Tell us about your book.

Harkness looks at him. Wipes some snot away.

HARKNESS
I started writing it already.

GARRATY
Yeah?

HARKNESS
Yeah. In case I don't... See, we die, right? But a book can go on forever. Words stick around. It's like a record. So no matter what happens to us, people will know.

Garraty sees Parker has fallen in step with them. He's listening.

BAKER
You've talked to a lot of the guys?

HARKNESS
Naw. Most of them made fun of me. I'm gonna go on as long as I can, though, get as much down as I can. That way it'll matter.

PARKER
The fuck do you mean "matter"?

Harkness turns and sees him. A little scared of Parker:

HARKNESS
I mean... people will know about us. Who we are, what we've done. It'll live on past us. Our lives will matter.

Parker stares at him. Mulling this over. Then:

PARKER
Collie Parker, Number 67. I'm from Joliet- you gettin' this?

Harkness reaches under his poncho and starts WRITING, shielding his pages from the rain.

HARKNESS
Uh-huh, what do you want people to know about you past your name?

PARKER
"The Major can suck my big hairy balls". Put that in for me.

Harkness keeps writing.

PARKER (CONT'D)
You make sure you get that right, we gotta make sure you get everything down there right.

Parker YELLS to the OTHER WALKERS:

PARKER (CONT'D)
Listen up! This guy's writing a book! Anyone who doesn't talk to him, I'm gonna personally fuck up, got it?

He notices Garraty and Baker staring at him, open mouthed.

PARKER (CONT'D)
What, you got a problem with that?

GARRATY
(amazed)
No...

PARKER
Then stop eye-balling me.
(to Harkness)
Let's go, Shakespeare, we got a lot of guys to talk to.

Parker leads Harkness away to continue the interviews.

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS

The sound of rain. Footsteps. Muted voices. One in particular, getting louder than the others, SHOUTING:

WOMAN (O.S.)
Percy... Percy. Percy! *Percy!*
PERRRRRRRRRRCYYYYYYYYY-

As the DARKNESS SNAPS INTO FOCUS...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAWN

Garraty's eyes SNAP OPEN. He's been walking asleep. The sun, coming up, the sky, still drizzling a bit. The roadside, lined with a small crowd, including PERCY'S MOTHER.

BAKER
Have a nice nap?

Garraty yawns, stretches. Looks around.

GARRATY
How long?

BAKER
Don't know. Only woke up an hour ago, myself.

GARRATY
We lose anybody?

BAKER
Look around.

Garraty looks around. The once 100 strong compliment of Walkers has dwindled considerably during the night.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Sixty-eight bottles of beer on the wall. May be less than a hundred, but still a lot of fucking bottles.

GARRATY
What about Olson?

BAKER
Still with us. Like the walking dead, that one. Harkness and Parker have been interviewing people all night, Barkovitch is still up near the front-

GARRATY
McVries?

A beat.

BAKER
I don't know. It was dark, a bunch of guys dropped - they got three at once, Ray, like some goddamn unholy trifecta-

GARRATY
Did you see him die?

BAKER
No. But I ain't seen him alive in awhile either.

Garraty stares at the road.

BAKER (CONT'D)
He's probably just up front-

GARRATY
Save it.

STEBBINS (O.S.)
Looking for someone, Garraty?

Stebbins has pulled alongside.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
I wonder what it feels like.

BAKER
What feels like?

STEBBINS
To sleep through your friend's death.

GARRATY
You saw?

STEBBINS
Can't say I did. But that doesn't mean it didn't happen. You heard Baker, it was dark-

BAKER
Fuck you, why you always picking at him?

Garraty looks up suddenly, understanding.

GARRATY
Because I scare him.

STEBBINS
Excuse me?

GARRATY
(to Baker)
I scare him, Art. Cause I could win this thing. And he knows it.

Stebbins sighs as they round a bend. A FAMILY on the side of the road. They cheer as they spy Garraty and hold up a homemade sign - **"GARRATY 47 - MAINE'S OWN".**

STEBBINS
Maybe its your edge, country boy. I don't think so, but maybe it is.

BAKER
What?

STEBBINS
Ray here's got a carrot.

BAKER
Is it possible for you to make *less* sense?

Stebbins ignores this, focusing on Garraty.

STEBBINS
A mule doesn't like to plow, but he does like carrots. So you hang a carrot in front of his eyes, he'll plow all day. We go through your hometown, right?

GARRATY
Yeah.

STEBBINS
Looking forward to seeing your loved ones?

GARRATY
Yes, I am.

STEBBINS
And what happens after that?

GARRATY
I keep on walking.

STEBBINS
Really. After you get your carrot. Never seen a mule do that before...

Garraty says nothing.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
Right now, you've still got something to believe in. But you reach a certain point when it all ceases to matter. And you burrow inside. Away from the world.

GARRATY
I think I get that.

STEBBINS
No, if you got that, you wouldn't care whether McVries was alive or dead. You're not there yet, not by a longshot. But you will be. Die or go crazy like Olson. He may be a zombie, but he's still walking. You don't learn how to do that after the carrot, you'll die like all the rest.

On Garraty's face. Scared. He knows it's the truth.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Watch Olson, Garraty. You can learn from Olson.

Garraty looks ahead to see

OLSON

Just a machine, now. All traces of life, of anima, gone from his face. A shambling haunted house on legs.

Garraty leaves Baker and Stebbins, falling in step with Olson.

GARRATY
Olson?

No response. The eyes don't even flicker.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Olson, can you talk?

Around them, the Crowd has grown thicker. Various MAINE RESIDENTS chanting:

THE CROWD
Garr-a-ty! Garr-a-ty! Garr-a-ty!

Garraty ignores them, focusing on Olson. Whispering to him.

GARRATY
Please, Olson. I can't understand...
Tell me how to do it, how to go on.
Tell me what to do.

OLSON
Ah. Ah.

He's making sounds, but that's it. Garraty, excited.

GARRATY
That's it, talk to me, Olson. Tell
me, please tell me-

OLSON
Ga-Garraty?

GARRATY
Yes, yes, it's me-

OLSON
God. God-

GARRATY
What your father said, that's right,
Olson, God'll protect you.

Olson shakes his head violently. Trying to get it out.

OLSON
God's. Garden.

GARRATY
What about God's Garden?

Olson looks up at him, eyes full of tears.

OLSON
It's full of weeds.

Garraty, stunned, as Olson begins to chant to himself.

OLSON (CONT'D)
My feet, my feet, my feet, my feet...

GARRATY
Hank, look-

And Olson turns abruptly and BOLTS AWAY. RUNNING towards the Half-Track, crying and yelling at the Soldiers:

OLSON
My feet! My feet! My feet! My feet!

He begins to try and CLIMB THE SIDE of the Half-Track...

GARRATY
Olson!

BAKER
Oh, shit, no...

Red Armband leans down and SMASHES the BUTT OF HIS RIFLE into Olson's face! Olson falls and lands hard on the asphalt, his legs *splayed out*...

OLSON
My feet! My feet! My-

As the Half-Track's SIDE TREADS rumble over Olson's legs, *crushing his feet*.

OLSON (CONT'D)
FEEEEEEEEEEEEEE-

GARRATY
Fucking Christ!

A TORRENT OF BLOOD from beneath the Half-Track where Olson's lower limbs are being OBLITERATED...

SOLDIER
Second Warning, 70! Second Warning!

OLSON
-EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE-

And Garraty can't tear his eyes away from this NIGHTMARE...

Olson, still screaming, trying to CRAWL AWAY from the now blood soaked Half-Track...

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 70! Final Warning!

...A river of crimson left in his body's wake as poor Olson tries to get *back up to speed*.

That's it.

Garraty pukes.

He DOUBLES OVER, screaming, crying, and vomiting, trying to deny what he has seen...

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Warning! Warning, Number 47!

Garraty TIPS OVER, now LYING ON THE PAVEMENT, looking over just in time to see Olson staring at him, screaming:

OLSON
I DID IT WRONG!

And then Olson's HEAD IS BLOWN OFF.

Garraty looks ahead - Baker walking away, everyone walking away - headed on down the road without him...

SOLDIER
Second Warning, 47! Second Warning!

Garraty rolls on his back and looks up...

Stebbins, passing him by, bringing up the rear, and then he's gone too, all of them ahead, leaving him behind...

Garraty looks up at the blue morning sky...

And then a PAIR OF HANDS grab him.

Pulling him to his feet. And a VOICE...

VOICE (O.S.)
Live a little longer, just a little longer...

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 47! Final Warning!

Garraty realizes the hands belong to

GARRATY
Pete?

MCVRIES
Christ, Ray, I can't fucking carry you, now *WALK!*

And Garraty does. One foot in front of the other.

ON THE HALF-TRACK

The Soldiers, sighting Garraty with their carbines. They lower their rifles.

Garraty, hyperventilating as McVries practically drags him along, trying to calm him down.

GARRATY
(rapidly)
I'm gonna see my girl in Freeport and I'm not gonna have any Warnings and I'm gonna kiss her, God I miss her, God, *Jesus*, did you see his *legs?* They were still warning him, Pete, like they thought he was gonna get up and walk-

MCVRIES
Is she pretty?

GARRATY
Jan, yeah, she's, she's-

MCVRIES
You gonna get married?

GARRATY
Yeah, we're gonna be Mr. and Mrs. Norman Normal, four kids and a collie, his *legs*, Olson didn't have any fucking *legs*-

MCVRIES
Two boys and two girls, that's what you're gonna have?

GARRATY
Yeah, yeah, she's beautiful, I told you that, I'm gonna die, Pete, I'm gonna die screaming, we're all gonna die screaming, *everybody loses*-

MCVRIES
What about Jan?

GARRATY
What about what-

MCVRIES
Jan, you want her to lose too?

Garraty, crying now.

GARRATY
I can't, I-

MCVRIES
Do you want to see her?

GARRATY
Yes!
(weeping)
I got three warnings! They don't warn you with three if you fall back, or trip, or- They shoot you, they don't warn you, they *shoot you*-

MCVRIES
Give me an hour. You walk an hour, lose a warning. We'll do it together.

GARRATY
I don't- if I can-

MCVRIES
You still want to hear about the scar?

GARRATY
Pete-

MCVRIES
(forcefully)
Her name was Priscilla. You think you got a case? I was the original Korny Kid - used to kiss her fingers and read her fucking *poetry*.

GARRATY
Pete, I *can't*-

MCVRIES
Last summer. We wanted to get away from home, away from her parents, away from the smell of cowshit so our great romance could bloom in earnest.

(MORE)

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
We got summer jobs at a pajama factory in Jersey. Separate apartments in Newark - me with four guys, her with three girls. On the drive down we stopped at a motel and took care of the virginity problem. She didn't want to, but she wanted to please me. I felt like a crook. The Shady Nook Motel. When we were done, I flushed the Trojan down the Shady Nook toilet and washed out my mouth with a Shady Nook paper cup. It was all very romantic, very ethereal.

They've reached the back of the pack, now. Walking in step with Stebbins who's listening.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Anyway... Newark. Smelled like cowshit, too, only this was different cowshit, see? The pajama factory - I was a bagger on the fifth floor, she was a sewer on the first. And I wasn't a very good bagger. Time went on, she started making more than me. A *lot* more. And I got to find out how much fun it is to be in competition with the girl you love. We fucked three more times, all at the drive-in, cause our roommates were always home. Always with the smell of cowshit coming in the car window from the pasture next door. I could tell she was getting disgusted. With all of this, with me.... I loved her, I really did, and I knew there was no way I could tell her anymore so she'd really understand. I couldn't even fuck it into her...

GARRATY
The scar.

MCVRIES
I got into a fight at work and quit. Went over to her place and I told her I quit and I was leaving town.
(MORE)

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
And since I knew I wanted her to come with me, and love me, and be with me forever, and since I'd already started hating her too, I asked her to marry me.

GARRATY
She said no.

MCVRIES
Of course she said no. She didn't want to leave the *job*, Ray! And I called her a greedy self centered bitch who couldn't see farther than her bank account. That night was the first night we were alone in her apartment and I tried to take her to bed, and she cut me with a letter opener. It was a gag letter opener some of her friends at sent her. Had Paddington Bear on it. She cut me like I was trying to rape her, like I was germs and I'd infect her. Are you getting the drift, Ray?

GARRATY
Yeah.

MCVRIES
I cried. I got down on my knees and held her skirt and begged her to forgive me, and all the blood was getting on her and the skirt and the floor and she gagged and ran off to the bathroom. I could hear her throwing up. When she came out, she had a towel for my face. She was crying and said she never wanted to see me again. She asked me why I hurt her - I'm there with my face cut open and she's asking me why I hurt *her*. I left with the towel on my face. Had twelve stitches and that's the story of the fabulous scar. My Jan turned out to be a bitch, Garraty. In the words of the great rock and roll singer, "I gave her my heart, she tore it apart, who gives a fart?" How you feeling?

Garraty stares at his friend. Realizes he's walking at normal speed again, a full recovery from his near-death experience.

GARRATY
All right, now. Thank you.

MCVRIES
I repay my debts, that's all. We're even.

GARRATY
I thought you were dead.

McVries gives a slight smile.

MCVRIES
I thought *you* were dead. Welcome back.

GARRATY
Yesterday, you said you knew why we were all walking and it wasn't the Prize. What'd you mean?

STEBBINS
Why are you *here*, Garraty?

Garraty starts at the sudden interruption. He doesn't know how to respond. Stebbins stares at him.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
You mean you don't know? You're dying and you don't know why?

MCVRIES
Leave him alone.

STEBBINS
He's a big boy, McVries. You already told him the story, now tell him what it means.

They share a look. Garraty doesn't understand.

GARRATY
What's he talking about, Pete?

MCVRIES
When I left Pris, the first thing I did was go and fill out an application for the Walk.

GARRATY
So? You wanted to show her up, to prove her wrong, win the Walk, win her back-

MCVRIES
No. You're hearing but you're not *listening*. I never wanted to see her again. I wanted to die.

On Garraty. Understanding suddenly, but not wanting to.

GARRATY
No...

MCVRIES
Yes. Its why I'm here, its why we're *all* here, Ray. In some way, to some degree, its what we all wanted. Otherwise, what the fuck are we doing here?

Garraty stares at him. Not responding. McVries wipes the sweat from his brow. Looking tired. They all do...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROUTE 95 -- NIGHT

On Garraty's feet. Just picking them up and putting them down. He's nudged on the side.

McVries. He looks up numbly. McVries points ahead...

The Walkers are being shunted down an ON RAMP. Transferring from the smaller Route 7 to the Interstate. Soldiers line the sides, making sure no one escapes during the transition. The signs above reads

INTERSTATE 95 SOUTH
AUGUSTA, PORTLAND

MCVRIES
The interstate. We've made the big time, Ray.

GARRATY
How many down?

MCVRIES
An even 50.
(smiling slightly)
We get to finish top tier.

BAKER
What's up ahead, my Maine man?

Garraty turns to see he and Stebbins walking close to them. He sighs as they start down the on ramp.

GARRATY
I can't remember all the little towns. I know we go through Lewiston, then along 196, and 126 through Freeport.

STEBBINS
Where Ray-Ray gets his carrot. You ever think maybe they won't come?

GARRATY
(ignoring him)
Freeport's also where we get onto U.S. 1.

BAKER
The big highway.

Garraty nods.

GARRATY
And that's where we stay till it ends.

This sobers them a bit, as does the appearance of Harkness. Nose runny, eyes watering, hacking cough now. Still gripping his pages. Weaving a bit.

MCVRIES
He's not going to make morning.

BAKER
Good.

Garraty and McVries look at him.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Oh, screw you both, it is. He's a nice guy, but I'm tired. You're telling me you're not tired?

Harkness weaves towards them.

HARKNESS
Garraty.

GARRATY
Hey, Harkness.

HARKNESS
Why'd you come on the Walk, Garraty?

STEBBINS
The big question, yes.

GARRATY
Fuck you, why'd *you* come?

Stebbins shrugs, smiling.

STEBBINS
Who can say, really?

HARKNESS
He won't tell me. Even when Parker threatened him, he still wouldn't say.

GARRATY
What's the big secret, Tom?

STEBBINS
You first, Ray.

He nods towards Harkness.

HARKNESS
For the book, Garraty. Why?

A beat. Garraty takes a deep breath.

GARRATY
Ray Garraty, Number 47 and honest to God, I don't know.
(MORE)

GARRATY (CONT'D)
I guess I applied to apply, and then they did the National Drawing and my name came out and-

STEBBINS
Not why'd you apply - why'd you *come?* You could have taken the back-out date.

MCVRIES
No one tried to talk you out of it?

GARRATY
Not at first. My Mom was really proud because all those kids take the test and only one in a thousand passes. And they had this big dinner in my honor and all my friends were there and shouting, "Speech! Speech!" And I got up and mumbled some shit about how if I made the Final Cut I'd do my best and everybody cheered like I'd just cured cancer. And besides, I didn't think I'd make the Final 100...

MCVRIES
No one does. That's why they don't pick them till after the last back-out. It's how they rig the game.

Garraty nods.

GARRATY
Right before then, Jan said don't do it. She said...
(looking at Harkness)
Could you not write this next part?

Harkness nods. Stops writing. Wipes his nose.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
She said she'd go all the way with me if I backed out. Anything I wanted, any time. I told her that would make me feel like an opportunist and a heel, and she said it was better than feeling dead, and then she cried a lot. And begged me.

BAKER
And your mother?

GARRATY
Not until the end. Not until I was chosen. The back-out date came and went and I got the call. I was a Walker. I was Prime. And we both knew it was too late.

He shakes his head.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
How could I have backed out? They'd had that dinner. What the fuck was I supposed to do after that, right?
(to Harkness)
I'm here because I was too scared to be a coward. Isn't that hysterical?

And he looks at Stebbins, who doesn't reply. But then from behind them... LAUGHTER. Shrieking and overdone.

Barkovitch. Nearly doubled over with it.

Limping. Eyes crazy as he cackles.

BARKOVITCH
Oh, God... God, that's- that's too much!

MCVRIES
Shut up, Killer.

BARKOVITCH
To scared to be a coward - *The fuck did you think we were doing here, playing Gin Rummy?*

He holds his sides, still laughing. Garraty, incredibly stung.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
Second Warning! Second Warning, 5!

BARKOVITCH
It's *so* worth it...

GARRATY
What are you gonna do when you win?

Barkovitch looks at him, still smiling, not understanding. Garraty, cold and clear eyed, stares back.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
When you win the Prize, what are you going to ask for?

BARKOVITCH
Me? I'm going to ask for plastic feet, Garraty. Plaaaaastic feet to dance on your graves!

GARRATY
Really? I thought maybe you'd ask for friends.

Barkovitch blinks at this.

BARKOVITCH
Friends?

GARRATY
Because you don't have any. We'll all be glad to see you die. No one's gonna miss *you*, Gary.

Barkovitch stares at him. Smile fading.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Maybe I'll walk behind you and spit on your brains when they blow them all over the road. Maybe we all will.

And suddenly Barkovitch is shaking like a small child being picked on. Whining:

BARKOVITCH
Don't hate me... Why do you want to hate me?

MCVRIES
(coldly)
We'll all spit in your brains, Killer.

BARKOVITCH
I- I don't want to die anymore than you do! What do you want? Do you want me to be sorry? I'm sorry! I'm...

He trails off, sobbing.

BAKER
Oh, did Ray make little uggy-wuggy cry? You gonna go cry to Mommy?

Barkovitch, covering his face, stumbles.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
Third Warning, 5! Final Warning!

Barkovitch stumbles away, weeping. Garraty looks after him, suddenly appalled by what he's said and done. Softly:

GARRATY
Sorry! Gary, I'm...

McVries puts a hand on his shoulder.

MCVRIES
Don't be a hypocrite about it.

GARRATY
But-

HARKNESS
(wheezing)
I'm gonna walk up front for awhile...

Garraty turns to him.

GARRATY
Don't put that in, okay? What I did, don't-

HARKNESS
Okay...

But Harkness says it like he hasn't even heard him, like he's on the verge of nodding off.

He increases his speed. Others follow.

Garraty watches them. Like people leaving a pariah. Only McVries and Baker stay. After a bit:

MCVRIES
It's okay.

Garraty looks at him, about to cry himself.

GARRATY
In what world?

BEHIND THEM

BARKOVITCH -- Still stumbling a bit. Wiping his eyes and nose from crying. A GLINT on the road - a BROKEN BOTTLE.

Barkovitch stares at it as he approaches. Deciding.

Reaches down and SCOOPS IT UP...

UP AHEAD

GARRATY -- Walking with McVries and Baker, about thirty yards ahead. Suddenly:

BAKER
Lead-lined, that's the way to go.
(pause)
I was gonna be a mortician, I tell you boys that?

They stare at him.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Most people say, "Don't matter to me Don, just dump me in a pine box when it's my time", but it does matter, see? You get a coffin lined with a lead sleeve so the worms can't get at your soft parts.
(looking at them)
It's the soft parts they go for, you know that, right?

MCVRIES
Jesus, Art, is now really the time?

BAKER
Just saying, lead-lined's the way to go.
(pause)
I don't think I want to be a mortician anymore.

ON BARKOVITCH

Coming up unseen behind them. Hand gripping the BROKEN GLASS like a weapon.

Holding it so tight that BLOOD runs down from his fist. His gaze locked on the EXPOSED NECKS of Garraty and McVries. Shifting from one to the other...

ON GARRATY

GUNSHOTS ring out ahead. They crane their heads to look.

GARRATY
Who?

MCVRIES
Probably Barkovitch...

BARKOVITCH (O.S.)
Wrong.

They are turning at the voice when Barkovitch LUNGES.

GRABBING GARRATY from behind, bringing the glass up, SHOWING IT TO HIM.

BARKOVITCH (CONT'D)
Is this what you want? I'll give you what you want!

And before Garraty can struggle or respond, Barkovitch PLUNGES THE GLASS into HIS OWN THROAT.

GARRATY
Jesus!

With a tearing motion, Barkovitch cuts his own throat and HOT CRIMSON SPLASHES out onto Garraty's shirt. Garraty twists away as Barkovitch goes to his knees gurgling and grinning.

BAKER
Fuck me!

GUNSHOTS. Barkovitch was on his third warning so the Soldiers shoot him anyway. He goes face down.

Garraty, McVries, and Baker stare at the body in horror.

GARRATY
I think... he did it *for* me...

Barkovitch's body disappears into the darkness behind them.

Nobody spits on him.

BAKER
Oh, no...

Baker's not looking back, he's looking ahead.

GARRATY
What?

BAKER
The shots from before.

Harkness's body comes into view. Face up, eyes glassy. Neck shot. Still.

MCVRIES
I think... I wish I were insane.

The guys step around Harkness and continue walking into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROUTE 126 -- MORNING

A hazy morning sun beats down on a worn traffic sign that reads FREEPORT, 2 MI..

Many less walkers on the road, their numbers down to somewhere in the twenties. Garraty moving at a faster clip than usual. Barkovitch's blood dried on his shirt now.

McVries next to him, making conversation.

MCVRIES
Not many of us left. Twenty-seven I think.

Garraty doesn't respond.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
Not many of *us*, either, Musketeer-wise. You, me, Baker, Collie Parker. Maybe Stebbins. You think we should count Stebbins, Ray?

PARKER
(shouting from behind)
We getting close to your goddamn town, Garraty?

Garraty doesn't respond, just keeps speeding along.

MCVRIES
What do you care, you don't have a girl waiting for you there!

PARKER
I got girls everywhere, you dumb hump! They take one look at this face and cream their silks!

A few other guys laugh at this, but Garraty doesn't even seem to register it. McVries, quietly to him:

MCVRIES
Slow down, save a little for tonight.

GARRATY
Stebbins said she might not be there.

MCVRIES
She'll be there, they'll make sure of it. It makes great TV.

GARRATY
But-

MCVRIES
No buts, slow down and live. How many warnings you walking with?

Garraty doesn't respond. He doesn't slow either.

STEBBINS
He has two.

McVries looks over at Stebbins. Then back to Garraty.

MCVRIES
You know you can't stop for them-

GARRATY
Get off my back, will you?

McVries recoils. A beat.

MCVRIES
Okay. Sure.

He drops back, letting Garraty continue on...

EXT. FREEPORT -- MAIN STREET -- MORNING

CHOKED with spectators on each side. Screaming Garraty's name. *"Ray-Ray-All-The-Way!"*

They wave banners and signs. There is a huge THREE STORY TALL PHOTOGRAPH of Garraty and his HIGH SCHOOL BAND plays Sousa under it...

A ROAR goes up as Garraty stumbles into view.

Garraty scans the crowds. Looking desperately for Jan and his Mom. Their hysteria only heightens his own. Whipping his head around, manic...

And then HE SEES THEM.

Over by a barrier on the left. A CAMERA CREW positioned right next to them...

JAN, young and fresh and beautiful, and Garraty's MOTHER next to her, weeping.

Garraty lurches off on a diagonal towards them.

Stebbins, watching from behind.

STEBBINS
(to himself)
Good-bye, Garraty.

Garraty reaches them. The Crowd so loud that we can't hear what they're saying - but Jan is mouthing "*I love you*" and Garraty is saying it too, trying to scream over them:

GARRATY
I love you, I love you and I'm sorry-

And he touches her hand and stops and instantly

SOLDIER (O.S.)
Third Warning, 47! Final Warning!

But it doesn't matter. He's made it to his mother and Jan and he's not going to move, he's never going to leave them again -

And McVries is suddenly at his side, screaming in his ear:

MCVRIES
Do you want them to see it? Do you want them to see you die, you selfish fuck?

SOLDIER *(O.S.)*
Second Warning, 61! Second Warning!

And we see Jan's lips shouting "*Go!*" But Garraty won't release her and McVries is trying to pull him away:

MCVRIES
Don't do this to them, do it around the next corner!

And the Soldiers unsling their rifles and there will be no fourth warning and Garraty's mother closes her eyes and

Garraty starts walking again.

It's like a wrenching a child away from his parents. He wails as he goes. But he goes.

McVries on his side. Panting hard. The crowd still thunderous. Garraty doesn't look back. He can't. But McVries does. Watching as Jan crumples into Garraty's mother.

And finally they round a bend and his family is out of sight.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
You can do it now if you want!

Garraty looks at him like he's speaking Greek.

MCVRIES (CONT'D)
They can't see anymore, so if you want to die, you can just sit down now- IS THAT WHAT YOU FUCKING WANT?

GARRATY
YES! YES! YES!

He screams it into McVries face and then dissolves back into tears. McVries steps away, waiting to see if Garraty stops.

But he just keeps walking.

The cheers for Garraty and the whole town of Freeport, fading behind them.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S. 1 -- NIGHT

The remaining Walkers transition onto U.S. 1.

An ICE COLD NIGHT WIND blows across the road, and the Walkers shiver under their ponchos.

Garraty walks like a zombie.

One foot in front of the other. Then

BAKER (O.S.)
Hey, Garraty, you want this?

Garraty looks over at him, numb. Baker's holding something out in his hands. Harkness's book.

BAKER (CONT'D)
I guess Collie Parker took it off Hark's body, cause he just gave it to me. I was gonna throw it away, but then I figured you might-

Garraty snatches it from him. Stuffing it under his poncho. Not looking at Baker. But Baker keeps pace with him.

BAKER (CONT'D)
There's something else.
(pause)
Only 22 of us left, you know. And the thing is... shit, I don't know how to say it.

GARRATY
(flat)
Just say it.

BAKER
We've been getting together on something. Sort of a promise.
(deep breath)
No help for anybody. Do it on your own, or don't do it.

A beat.

GARRATY
Everyone else?

BAKER
They're for it.

Garraty stares straight ahead.

GARRATY
I maybe owe McVries a couple.

BAKER
You help someone else, we'll shut you out. Nothing personal.

GARRATY
Yeah. Just back to the jungle.

BAKER
You in or not?

Garraty looks at him.

GARRATY
Maybe I should get all high road and say I'm above it, but goddammit, I want to see you buy out soon.

BAKER
And me you.

GARRATY
Those look like good shoes, Art.

BAKER
Yeah, but they're too heavy. You buy for distance, you gain the weight.
(pause)
It's nothing personal. You know that, Ray.

GARRATY
I know.

BAKER
Okay then.

Garraty nods, curtly. Keeps walking. Then he frowns.

GARRATY
Why did Parker give you Hark's book just now?

BOOM! A SOLDIER FLIES into frame, slamming down on the road in front of them!

PARKER
What's up now, motherfuckers!

Garraty and Baker turn to see

PARKER

Standing on top of the Half-Track! He's wrestled a RIFLE from one of the soldiers and turns it on the others, PULLING THE TRIGGER and

Three round BURSTS RIP THROUGH the other soldiers! The Crowd and some of the Walkers ROAR as Parker machine-guns their tormentors. Screaming down to his friends:

PARKER (CONT'D)
Come on, you guys! Come on!

The Walkers just look up at him numbly.

PARKER (CONT'D)
We can take them! We can-

BOOM! A soldier SHOOTS PARKER IN THE BACK, blowing a hole through his chest.

Parker's rifle dips and fires two rounds into the asphalt. They ricochet and someone in the crowd goes down screaming.

Parker looks down in the hole in him.

PARKER (CONT'D)
God. Damn.

BOOM! BOOM! Two more bullets blow him off the half-track. He lands in a heap on the road. Steam rises from the holes.

BAKER
He snuck up on them. That's wonderful. That's just... We could have maybe done it.

He trails off, smiling. They walk past Parker's body and into the night

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S. 1 -- DAY

The sun BEATS DOWN. Hard and harsh. Ponchos discarded. Sweat rolling down them.

Garraty blinks at a sign as they pass it - NOW ENTERING NEW HAMPSHIRE. A mega-phoned voice from somewhere far away:

THE MAJOR (O.S.)
Congratulations Walkers! This is the largest compliment of Walkers to have crossed the New Hampshire border in over a decade. Let's here it for the Final Twelve!

The CROWD ROARS.

Garraty looks around. Sure enough, only 12 left. McVries one of them. Garraty angles toward him. They haven't spoken since Freeport.

GARRATY
Hey.

McVries gives him a tired smile.

MCVRIES
Hey. Top tier lives to fight another day.

GARRATY
Hey, McVries?

MCVRIES
Yeah?

GARRATY
You still think I'll win?

McVries smiles again.

MCVRIES
Always get this hot up here in spring?

Garraty cocks his head at him.

GARRATY
Pete.

MCVRIES
No, I don't think you'll win.
(pause)
It's Stebbins, Ray. We both know it. Word is Vegas has him nine-to-one since Parker bought out. Christ, he almost looks the same as when we started.

Garraty looks ahead at Stebbins's lanky form. Not even limping. Garraty sets his jaw straight.

GARRATY
Doesn't matter, anyway.

MCVRIES
It doesn't, huh?

GARRATY
We're just grist for the mill. Entertainment for the masses.
(realizing)
We're a box score.

MCVRIES
Why, Raymond, if I didn't know you better, I'd say you were getting nihilistic on me.

GARRATY
We wanted this, isn't that what you said? Isn't that the moral of the story?

McVries smile disappears.

MCVRIES
I don't want to die. I don't know much, but I know that.

GARRATY
Me either.

Ahead there is a SCREAM. No shots, just a boy yelling.

SOLDIER
Warning! Warning, Number 3!

It's Baker. Bad charlie-horse. He lies on the road, massaging it. Garraty starts to move towards him without even thinking. McVries grabs his shoulder.

MCVRIES
No. No more Musketeers.

A beat. Garraty nods. Accepting it.

They pass Baker. He looks up at them as they go.

SOLDIER
Second warning, 3! Second warning!

He disappears out of frame.

We hold on Garraty and McVries as they walk. Eyes front. From behind them:

SOLDIER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Third warning, 3! Final Warning!

Garraty grits his teeth. Waiting for the shots...

They don't come. They keep walking.

After a moment, Baker strides back into frame. Limping, still massaging the muscle, but on the move again.

He looks over to his friends. No one says anything.

They all walk on alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S. 1 -- NIGHT

LIGHTNING FLASHES. Heat lightning. No rain.

Eight of them left.

Out of nowhere, Garraty STUMBLES. Looking down to see

His boot heel has come off. It flops back and forth with each stride. One leg now longer than the other.

He stops. Looking down at it curiously.

SOLDIER
Warning! Warning, Number 47!

Unhurried, he bends down and unlaces his boots.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Second Warning, 47! Second Warning!

Shoes off, he straightens up and tosses them into the CROWD, which reacts by fighting over them like a home run ball.

Garraty begins walking again. Socks against pavement.

Mumbling to no one in particular:

GARRATY
I have lost my shoes.
(pause)
I have lost my shoes.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S. 1 -- DAY

Crowds as far as the eye can see. Seven walkers left.

Stebbins walks, eating peanut butter crackers. Garraty next to him, looks at him, sickly.

STEBBINS
What's a matter? Can't take it?

Garraty just swallows. It seems to take a lot of effort. McVries, nearby.

MCVRIES
We're gonna make it to Massachusetts
I think...

Stebbins nods, mouth full.

STEBBINS
First Walk to do it in seventeen
years. They'll go crazy.

GARRATY
How do you know so much about the
Walk?

Stebbins just keeps eating.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Fine. What'll you do if you win?

MCVRIES
I suspect he'd donate a couple million to the Society For Intensifying Cruelty To Animals.

Stebbins laughs. Coughs a little on the dry crackers.

STEBBINS
Why don't you both go back to Freeport, see Garraty's girl?

GARRATY
Sorry, Stebbins, you're not pushing the right buttons anymore.

Garraty reaches to his belt and extracts a granola bar. Chewing on it. Smiling.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
I figure I can walk another day if I have to. Two if I need to. Resign yourself to it. Eat some more crackers.

And for the first time, we see Stebbins frown. Just a little, but it's there. Garraty seizes on it.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Come on, Stebbins, tell us why you're here. Since we're all going to spend so much more time together.

Stebbins stares at him... and then suddenly doubles over and VOMITS. All those crackers coming back up. Garraty beams.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
It'll just be between the three of us. Now that we know you're not Superman, anymore.

Stebbins wipes his mouth and glares at them.

STEBBINS
You *really* want to know?

GARRATY
Yes.

STEBBINS
Why am I here or why do I walk?

GARRATY
I want to know *everything*.

Stebbins hocks out a great gob of spit and stares ahead.

STEBBINS
I'm the rabbit.

MCVRIES
The what?

STEBBINS
The rabbit. The little mechanical thing the dogs chase at the racetrack. Now matter how fast they run, they can never quite catch him.
(pause)
He fooled me.

His eyes welling up a bit.

GARRATY
Who?

STEBBINS
No. He conjured me. And made me into his rabbit. How do *I* know so much about the Long Walk?

He laughs a little through the tears. Turning to them.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
Did you know your father, Garraty? Before he was Squadded? I didn't know mine until he conjured me...

GARRATY
What the hell are you talking about-

STEBBINS
The Major! *The Major is my father, Garraty!*

His tears leave no doubt that he is telling the truth. Garraty and McVries stare at him open mouthed.

MCVRIES
No...

STEBBINS
Oh, yes. I'm his bastard. He's got dozens of them. But, I didn't think he knew. I didn't think he knew he had a son, that's where I made my mistake. What I wanted was to spring it on him - spring it on the whole world. And when I won, the Prize I was going to ask for was to be taken into my father's house.

GARRATY
But he *knew?*

STEBBINS
When he gave me my number. He said he expected to see me at the finish. He said no son of his would lose. You see? He knew all along. He let me qualify, he let me get selected, because he knew how badly I'd want the Prize. How much more than all of you. He made me his rabbit.
(shaking his head)
We're going to make it to Massachusetts. Maybe even farther. How ever far I have to go...

He looks at them. With conviction.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
I am going to win.

He's sure of it. And from the looks he gets back, he knows they're now sure of it too.

Stebbins speeds up a little. Walking ahead. Garraty and McVries let him. Keeping pace with each other in silence.

BAKER (O.S.)
Guys?

They turn to see Baker. Something has broken inside him. Blood has poured from his nose and is soaking his front.

BAKER (CONT'D)
It's not bad, is it?

Garraty and McVries swallow back their revulsion.

GARRATY
No, not too bad.

BAKER
The rain feels so warm. I know it's only rain, though. It's only rain, right?

MCVRIES
Right.

BAKER
I wish I had some ice to put on it.

He wipes his mouth. Then:

BAKER (CONT'D)
Are we in?

MCVRIES
What?

BAKER
Garraty, are we in?

GARRATY
Yeah, we're in, Art. We're in.

Baker smiles.

BAKER
Good. I'm gonna die now, Garraty.

Garraty stares at him.

BAKER (CONT'D)
If you win, will you do something for me?
(leaning in)
I'm too scared to ask anyone else...

GARRATY
Anything.

Baker puts a hand on his shoulder and whispers simply:

BAKER
Lead-lined.

Garraty begins to cry.

GARRATY
Walk a little bit longer. Just a little longer, Art...

BAKER
I can't.

A beat. They stare at each other.

MCVRIES
All right.

He shakes Baker's hand. Garraty does too.

BAKER
Maybe I'll see you.
(pause)
Don't watch them do it. Promise me that, too.

MCVRIES
Okay.

He looks to Garraty, who is wiping away tears.

GARRATY
Okay.

Baker nods. Tries to smile...

BAKER
Thanks. You've been my friends.

He can't quite muster it.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Another time, another place.

And then he drops back. Slowing...

Dropping out of frame.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
Third Warning, 3! Final Warning!

Garraty closes his eyes to keep from weeping. McVries too.

There are no more warnings.

Just GUNSHOTS.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S. 1 -- NIGHT

A full moon.

A soldier on the Half-Track finishes PUMPING BULLETS into an expiring frail boy.

Garraty blinks awake at the sound of it. Almost trips over the dead kid. Looks up, dazed. Seeing -

Only Stebbins in front of him.

Then he looks back.

Only McVries behind him. Realizing...

It's only the three of them left.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.S. 1 -- DAY

Somehow, the three of them stumble on together.

The crowd all around them is just a fuzzy mass. All they know, all they focus on, is the road and each other.

Stebbins raises a water bottle to his cracked lips.

STEBBINS
Tell us a story, Garraty...

The first words spoken in hours. Garraty looks at him.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
Tell us a story to take our minds off our troubles.

MCVRIES
Yeah. A story.

He looks like an old man, now. All of them have aged incredibly.

GARRATY
Okay.

(MORE)

GARRATY (CONT'D)
(pause)
Once upon a time-

STEBBINS
Oh, who wants to hear a fucking fairy story?

McVries giggles. It doesn't sound sane.

GARRATY
(petty)
You want to hear it or not?

STEBBINS
Fine. Fair story's better than no story at all, you wise ass.

MCVRIES
My ass is no wiser than your ass.

He giggles again. Garraty takes a deep breath.

GARRATY
Once upon a time there was a white knight that went out into the world on a quest. He left his castle and walked through the Enchanted Forest-

STEBBINS
(correcting)
Knights ride.

GARRATY
Fine, he *rode* through the Enchanted Forest then. And he had many strange adventures. He fought off thousands of trolls and goblins and a shitload of wolves, all right? And he finally got to the King's castle and asked permission to take Gwendolyn, the lady fair, out walking.

STEBBINS
Always with the fucking walking...

GARRATY
But the king wasn't digging it, thinking no one was god enough for
(MORE)

GARRATY (CONT'D)
his daughter Gwen, the world famous Lady Fair, but the Lady Fair loved the White Knight so much that she threatened to run away into the Wildwoods if... if...

Dizziness hitting him. Losing a bit of time. He blinks, coming to, to see

McVries angling off, walking towards the crowd. Dead asleep.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Hey, Pete! Pete!

STEBBINS
Leave it alone.

Garraty turns to catch up to McVries. Stebbins shouts after him:

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
You made the promise like the rest of us-

GARRATY
Fuck you! *Pete!*

He reaches him. Touching his shoulder to make a course correction. McVries' eyes flutter open. Sleepily:

MCVRIES
No, Ray. It's time to sit down.

GARRATY
No! No way!

McVries looks at him for a moment and then smiles.

Then he takes a seat cross-legged on the pavement.

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 61! Final Warning!

GARRATY
No!

He tries to pick McVries up and drag him, like a war-protestor, but McVries can't be budged.

The Soldiers unsling their rifles...

The Crowd pushes forward, sensing blood...

Garraty puts himself between the Soldiers and McVries.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
No! Me! Shoot me!

He shields him with his body. The Soldiers can't get a shot. Garraty pounds his chest at them.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
SHOOT ME!

One Soldier jumps down from the Half-Track and goes to Garraty. Dragging him off McVries, clearing the shot.

Garraty tries to resist, but he's got no strength left. He looks back to see McVries smile one last time...

And then in the thunder of rifles, McVries is gone.

Garraty stands there, looking back at his fallen friend.

His last friend.

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 47! Final Warning!

Wrenching himself away, Garraty starts walking again. Just like he's done with all the others. Leaving McVries behind.

Stebbins looks at him, curiously.

STEBBINS
Finish the story.

Garraty just walks.

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
Finish the story, will you?

GARRATY
No. I don't think so.

Stebbins nods, taking this in.

STEBBINS
If souls exist, his is still close.
(MORE)

STEBBINS (CONT'D)
(smiles)
You hurry, you could catch up.

Garraty stares at him.

GARRATY
I'm gonna walk you into the ground.

He says it simply. Stating it like a fact.

STEBBINS
Are you? We'll see...

FADE TO:

EXT. U.S. 1 -- AFTERNOON

Later that day.

AN OVERHEAD SHOT

From almost a mile up. You can see a tiny road bisecting the frame. Both sides, CHOKED WITH SPECTATORS.

Thousands deep. They extend to the horizon.

CUT TO:

IN THE CROWD

We're pushing through the multitudes, who are screaming and shouting and jostling to get some kind of a look at the Final Two Walkers.

We pan past a TELEVISION that's covering the event and see a clip package on Garraty, but then we're past and it's gone...

And we push past them, finally reaching the CONCRETE BARRIER between the crowd and the road and we look out to see

EXT. U.S. 1 -- AFTERNOON

Garraty and Stebbins. The Final Two Walkers. The Undead.

Near the end, and as bad as Stebbins described. They don't even look human anymore. Just shells of humans, built to put one foot in front of the other.

What used to be Stebbins comes first. At least his gait is still straight.

Six feet behind him is what used to be Garraty. His posture's stooped, a hitch in his stride. Something wrong with his right hip, so he's tipping the way.

Garraty's eyes are glazed. He blinks like he's coming to.

GARRATY'S P.O.V

Stebbins' angular form ahead. The Crowds on either side like snapping jackals. One little girl holds a sign that says *"40 Miles to Boston - You Can Do It Walkers!"*

Garraty begins quivering at the sight of it. No tears left.

GARRATY
Can't... I...

He shakes his head, violently...

Then catches sight of his own feet.

Bare. They socks long since walked away. Just flesh against asphalt now. And he's begun leaving bloody footprints behind.

And then he notices his pants. Dark stain by the crotch. He's pissed himself.

Garraty gags. Chokes it back. Nothing left to puke, nothing left to cry, nothing left to give.

Looking at the boy in front of him. Realizing. Resigning himself, as he repeats McVries words...

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Stebbins.... It's... Stebbins.

He tries to call this out to Stebbins louder. Can't. With a herculean effort he picks up his speed.

He has to tell him. He has to him he won.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
It's you... Stebbins... It's...

He touches Stebbins' shoulder.

Stebbins turns to him. There seems to be blood running from his ears. One eye is milky white. He's gone far past where Olson did. Expression like he's coming out of a dream...

Garraty tells him, with great conviction.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
You. It's you.

Stebbins cocks his head. And then emits a strangled guttural:

STEBBINS
Oh, Garraty...

And Stebbins COLLAPSES. He goes face down in the road. Probably dead before his forehead smacks the pavement.

SOLDIER
Third Warning, 88! Final Warning!

The Crowd pushes forward in a crescendo of blood lust. The little girl with the sign screams as she's crushed up against the barricade...

Garraty sits down next to the body. Not understanding.

GARRATY
Stebbins?

Blood pools under Stebbins head.

GARRATY (CONT'D)
Stebbins, you won...

The Soldiers shoot Stebbins.

Garraty loses interest. Gets up and wanders away.

The crowd is THUNDEROUS. Some break through the barricade and start tearing clothes off Stebbins' body. The Soldiers loose a few rounds to drive them back.

Garraty walks on.

A Humvee coming down the road towards him. The Major on the back.

The Humvee pulls to a halt in front of him.

Garraty frowns. Tries to walk around it.

A soldier gets out. Holds up his hand for him to stop.

THE MAJOR
Sit, son. You've done it.

Garraty looks at him funny. Not really able to process words anymore.

Cameras there now. Jostling for position to film this historic moment between the Major and the Winner.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
What do you want?

Garraty's looking past him. Not speaking. Fixated on something behind the Major...

The Major takes a deep breath. Not used to anyone not responding to him.

THE MAJOR (CONT'D)
Son, you've just won the Walk, what do you *want?*

Garraty's upper lip begins quivering...

GARRATY
Fif-Fif-Fif...

The Camera crews push forward.

THE MAJOR
Yes?

GARRATY
F-friends...

He smiles. The Major frowns. Garraty's still looking past him, grinning widely now.

REVERSE ANGLE and now we see what Garraty's seeing --

ALL 99 WALKERS. Heading down the road past the Major. Clean and fresh and spry like they were when they started.

McVries and Baker, smiling and happy. Bathed in a soft light. They wave for Garraty to come on, catch up!

Garraty grins. Presses something into the Major's hands and then GOES. Moving past the Major, past them all.

TIGHT ON GARRATY'S FACE

As he moves.

Smile growing as goes to his friends. His speed increasing.

By the time he reaches them, he's running.

BACK TO THE MAJOR

Shaking his head as MEDICAL PERSONNEL rush past him. The Major turns away. Looking down at what Garraty gave him...

It is the crumpled pages of Harkness's book.

Names and stories recorded in chicken-scrawl. Blood on them too. Some of that gets on the Major's hands.

He drops the pages to wipe his hands off on his pants.

The Major turns and climbs back into the Humvee as we see an AMBULANCE arrive through the parting crowd. Nods to his driver and they're off.

ON THE ABANDONED PAGES

A stiff breeze blows, scattering them away.

The last image we see are the names of the Walkers, names that matter, blowing on down the road.

ROLL CREDITS

FADE OUT